

South Carolina Partners Program

Background

From the time of the American Revolution until the early 1900's, rice was cultivated along the larger river systems of coastal South Carolina. This was performed by creating an extensive system of dikes, ditches, and water control structures. As the demise of the rice industry occurred, most dike fields were abandoned and became vegetated with naturally occurring wetland species. These intact and remnant rice plantation impoundments functioned as freshwater marsh and provided important habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl as well as other water birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, and amphibians. Landowners have maintained and managed many of these fields for waterfowl and other wildlife. Today many of the water control structures are now dilapidated and without control of water levels, proper habitat management cannot be maintained.

Purpose and Objectives

Ducks Unlimited Inc, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) have agreed to work together to provide owners of intact remnant ricefield impoundments incentive and assistance to restore, improve, and maintain these managed wetland systems for the benefit of waterfowl, wading birds, shore birds, and other wildlife species. This initiative, which began in 1997, is known as the South Carolina Partners Program. The pilot area for this program is the Winyah Bay Focus Area. The participating partners provide technical assistance and financial assistance to meet the objective. A typical project involves replacement of a rice trunk water control structure. Maintenance of existing dikes and drainage ditches are often performed as a part of the project.

Procedures

Landowners can obtain assistance by contacting any of the offices listed at the bottom of this page. A biologist will conduct a site visit. Landowners requesting funding assistance are put on a list. Potential projects are ranked for funding by the South Carolina Partners Committee in September of each year. Approved projects will be funded 50% with a maximum of \$10,000. Landowners are required to provide a 50% match. The landowner's cost share can include in-kind services. Landowners are involved in the planning process with representatives from all four South Carolina Partners organizations. Landowners contract the work and receive reimbursement from the appropriate agency after the work is completed, inspected, and approved. Project work is required to meet the standards of the South Carolina Partners program.

For more information, contact any of the following:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Joe Cockrell, Program Coordinator, Charleston, SC, (843) 727-4707 ext. 17, Cockrell@fws.gov

Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Kenny Williams, Summerville, SC, (843) 846-1613

S.C. Dept of Natural Resources, Bob Perry, Georgetown, SC, (843) 546-9489

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Debbie Mann, Georgetown, SC (843) 546-7808



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